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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 001427

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CVIS](#) [MK](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GREECE/MACEDONIA: FM BAKOYANNIS POSITIVE ON NIMETZ
PROPOSAL, NEGATIVE ON VWP

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard for 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) In a 10/9 conversation with Ambassador Speckhard, FM Bakoyannis said Greece considered UN mediator Nimetz' latest proposal to be a "good basis," but with some remaining areas for refinement - particularly stronger provisions on bilateral usage of the new name. Bakoyannis laid out the GOG's seriousness in responding to the proposal; most significantly she spent a "tough day" consulting with major opposition PASOK President George Papandreou on the proposal to start the process of building unified government-opposition support for a solution. The Ambassador welcomed her seriousness in working to forge political support for a consensus but cautioned that efforts to change Nimetz' proposal could unravel it. He urged her to seek to obtain any absolutely necessary "refinements" outside of the Nimetz proposal itself. Bakoyannis reiterated that if Skopje can "accept the name and its use in bilateral relations, we are very close to a deal."

2. (C) Bakoyannis said she was aware of plans for Washington to announce next week that a number of states would join the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and that Greece would be excluded. She could not understand how Greece, which had cooperated fully with the U.S. in introducing new passports and combating terrorists could be left out. This would be received badly by the Greek public who would see it as "punishment" for Greece's refusal to join NATO consensus on an invitation to Macedonia.

3. (C) The efforts to build political support and reach out to the opposition are signs that the FM and PM believe they are close to a deal they can live with. The newspapers are mixed in their reaction and much will depend on how successful Bakoyannis is in shaping public perceptions in the days to come. In that vein, the Greek exclusion from VWP is likely to present a difficult PR hurdle for the FM to overcome and could seriously undermine the best chance we have seen in a long time to find a solution to the name issue. End Summary.

Bakoyannis - Nimetz Proposal "Good Basis"

4. (C) Bakoyannis told the Ambassador that the "new name" in the latest Nimetz proposal is "OK for Greece." She added, however, that "erga omnes is not OK," adding that "more agreement" was needed on the question of bilateral usage of the new name (Comment: The Greek "erga omnes" position has been that the new name should be used for "all usages." Bakoyannis statement that work needed to be done on bilateral usage of the new name is a tacit acceptance that Greece's maximalist position is not sustainable, and moves Greece closer to Nimetz' earlier proposal of one name for domestic use and another name for international use. End Comment). Bakoyannis said that the new name should be used "every day" in bilateral relations, adding that she thought this was achievable. Bakoyannis made no reference to any suggestions by Nimetz related to ethnicity and identity and the adjective to be employed in this regard. She did term the proposal a "good basis," and "concrete progress," but reiterated that "further refinements" were needed.

5. (C) The Ambassador encouraged Bakoyannis to consider whether Greece's refinements were absolutely necessary,

suggesting that a workable solution required acceptance in both Athens and Skopje. Further changes were likely to move the two sides further apart, rather than closer together. If Greece needed some additional assurances on how the agreement would be implemented, the Ambassador urged the FM to seek to develop the necessary "understandings" outside of the proposal itself. Any effort to seek to amend the proposal could cause it to unravel.

16. (C) Bakoyannis reiterated the importance of bilateral usage of the new name. She said that a commitment from the United States to use the new name in its bilateral use would "go a long way," but added that Greece wanted this new name to be "used generally." She also expressed interest in greater precision on how Macedonia would implement this proposal. The Ambassador pushed back, noting that President

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Crvenkovski and PM Gruevski should be responsible to figure out how to get any settlement they had agreed to through their political system.

Building Support with the Opposition

17. (C) Bakoyannis said she had just spent a "tough day" with major opposition PASOK party president George Papandreou. She said the GOG wants Papandreou's buy-in on this issue. He had been "very concerned" about bilateral usage of the new name, wanting Greece to seek written assurances in this regard. Bakoyannis asserted, however, that Papandreou had been "serious" and "responsible" in their consultations.

18. (C) Bakoyannis said the political system would "need some time" to digest this issue. She predicted it could be "more than weeks" before the GOG had developed the support it seeks from the opposition and public in response to th% QQ!Q Q! QQQQ!%\$%%,-----
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face of mixed to critical public commentary on the latest
proposal. Many in the public sphere have criticized the
proposal for "crossing redlines," particularly related to
scope of use. For FM Bakoyannis to spend capital with the
opposition to build support for a settlement on this basis is
an indication of the GOG's seriousness in coming to closure
and in using this latest proposal as the basis to do so.

112. (C) However, the expected disappointment with Greece's exclusion from VWP and the ensuing public outcry could halt any progress. We expect FM Bakoyannis - who has been a strong supporter of U.S.- Greek relations - to pull back from being too close to the U.S. in order to protect herself politically. We may even see her lash out in certain ways to maintain her ability to operate in the Greek political system. In this context, Greek flexibility and creativity related to the Macedonia name issue is at risk. A strong message from Washington regarding Greece's prospects and timing for future entry into VWP will be important to keep the name negotiations on track. End Comment.
SPECKHARD